Splint Therapy

A bite splint is a removable appliance, or orthotic device, that has a number of uses. It can be used both as a diagnostic tool and for therapeutic treatment. It allows both the doctor and the patient an opportunity to learn what is causing the symptoms, relieve discomfort, and help decide what, if anything, should be done next.

- By separating the teeth and properly aligning the jaw joints, the splint can decrease clenching and grinding and the ensuing pain and dysfunction.

- With precise adjustment, we can simulate a "perfect bite" in the acrylic of the splint. We can then determine what influence the teeth contacts have on the pain and dysfunction of the joints, disc and muscles. This information is used to confirm and refine the diagnosis for the patient. Usually we are able to learn what we need to know within the first 30 days of treatment.

- Once the best position of the TM joint in the socket is established, a determination of proper and appropriate further treatment can be made. This could include reshaping the tops of the teeth to attain harmony between the tooth contacts and the jaw position (equilibration). Additional treatment could include orthodontic treatment, surgery to reposition the teeth and jaws, restoring the teeth to establish an appropriate bite and/or continued bite splint therapy.

- Long-term splint wear may be indicated for nighttime clenching and grinding to protect the teeth or restorations from wearing and chipping. There are also certain medical conditions and medications that trigger grinding and could necessitate long-term splint use.

The plastic in the appliance itself costs very little, what you are paying for is the considerable time, experience, care, skill and judgment necessary to obtain a diagnosis. One significant advantage of using a splint is that it is completely reversible-just remove the splint and you are back to square one! Most people who have worn a splint, though, would not consider giving up the improvement in the level of comfort that they have achieved.